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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8209th meeting

Monday, 19 March 2018, 3.20 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Provisional agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As far as I know, today's meeting was not scheduled in the Security Council's agreed programme of work for this month. Our delegation would be extremely grateful to you, Mr. President, if you could explain what exactly we are supposed to discuss at today's meeting and whom the Council plans to invite as briefers.

The President: The representative of France has asked for the floor.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France and six other Council members asked for this briefing to be held for both functional and substantive reasons. With regard to the functional reasons, in order to act, the Council should have at its disposal all the information it needs to understand the crises it considers, including information on human rights. That is particularly the case with Syria, where, as we all know, the human rights dimension has been inextricably linked to the dynamics of the conflict from the outset. There have been other briefings by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on situations on the Council's agenda. Syria should not and cannot be an exception.

That brings me to the basic reason for our collective request. Our last such briefing on Syria, by then-High Commissioner Navi Pillay, was in 2014. Human rights are a fundamental aspect of the crisis that the Council has not dealt with since then, even though violations of human rights are at the heart of the conflict and its intensification, to the detriment of international peace and security. The briefing we decided to call for will therefore complement those that have been devoted to the humanitarian, chemical and political situations in Syria. If we do not have an understanding of the human rights dimension of the conflict in Syria and the potential solution to it, we are simply being unrealistic and in denial. Who could understand it? The regime, along with other parties, especially Da'esh, has violated people's rights not just as a consequence of the fighting but by using such violations as a chosen, deliberate weapon and instrument of control over territories and populations.

Lastly, human rights are inseparable from a political settlement of the conflict. If the Council wishes to commit in good faith to ensuring that the same atrocities are not repeated, it must contribute to a political solution based on a Syrian society that offers inclusion for all its sectors, as well as institutions that respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Syrians. For all those reasons and others, France has called for this meeting and urges all members of the Council to express their willingness for it to be held.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is opposed to holding today's meeting, as we immediately informed our colleagues on Friday, 16 March. We see no justification for such a meeting, since human rights is not a subject on the Security Council's agenda. That is what the Human Rights Council deals with in its work in Geneva. The mere presence of Mr. Ra'ad Hussein in New York is not a convincing reason for him to brief the Security Council.

However, as I understand it, the French delegation, along with a number of others, has already explained the real reasons behind today's meeting. They want to hear about how the Syrian regime, as they refer to it, is violating the rights of its own people. I note once again that their subject is that infamous regime, rather than the extremists whom they openly support and who have been terrorizing the people of Syria for eight years now. That only confirms our fears about the deeply politicized nature of this initiative, which has nothing to do with concern for the Syrians.

We would also like to ask the Secretariat to explain the reason for circulating to delegations a note on human rights in Syria from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, despite the fact that we did not request that information. The United Nations system is not organized so that any United Nations body can send the Security Council any information it feels like. We believe that the Secretariat blindly obeyed the delegations that decided to hold this briefing, in violation of the division of labour among the main organs of our Organization, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In the circumstances, we believe it essential to cancel the meeting and we are

therefore obliged to ask the President to put the issue to a procedural vote.

The President: In view of the request of the Russian Federation and the comments made by members of the Council, I intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would just like to explain that the item on our agenda, "The situation in the Middle East", is an existing agenda item and that of course we are not against it per se. What we are against is holding today's meeting in the format that has been proposed. Therefore, I would ask the President to formulate the question to reflect the fact this is a procedural vote.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States of America): The United States strongly supports the holding of today's meeting and urges all Council members to support the procedural vote in favour of proceeding as planned today. The Russian Federation's continued efforts to obstruct the Council's work and its attention to grave and systemic human rights violations by the Russian Federation's allies are appalling, and the Council should not allow them to stand.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Charter of the United Nations clearly outlines the functions of and divisions of labour among all the main organs of the United Nations. The primary role of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security, not to consider human rights issues. Pushing the Security Council into discussing human rights issues erodes the functions of other United Nations organs and will not help us to find an effective solution to the issue. China opposes holding deliberations in the Security Council on such issues, and in particular on questions of human rights in Syria.

The President: I would like to ask the representative of the Russian Federation to clarify what he wants to be put to a vote, if he wants a procedural vote.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We propose voting on whether the meeting should be held today or not. Obviously, we assume that the issue that should be put to the vote is whether today's meeting should be held in principle. We have not yet adopted the agenda for today's meeting. If we had, the meeting would take place. But that has not happened.

The President: The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the provisional agenda for today's meeting. I shall put the provisional agenda to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

France, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia

The President: The provisional agenda received 8 votes in favour, 4 votes against and 3 abstentions. The provisional agenda has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.